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THE
Prisoners Vindication
WITH
A Sober Expostulation
AND
REPREHENSION
OF
Persecutors.

By John Gratton.

*What mean ye, that ye beat my People to pieces, and grind
the faces of the Poor, saith the LORD God of Hosts ?
Isa. 3. 15.*

*Lord, how long shall the Wicked Triumph ? How long shall
they utter and speak hard things ? They break in pieces thy
People, O Lord, and afflict thy Heritage ; they slay the
Widdow and the Stranger, and murder the Fatherless,
Psal. 94. 3, 4, 5, 6.*

L O N D O N :

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL

Dear Sir,

I have been thinking of you very much lately, and of the work you are doing for the study of the life of Jesus. It is a work of great importance, and one which is not often done. I am sure that your efforts will be rewarded in the end.

Yours very truly,
J. M. W.

To all Persecutors, both by Words and Actions.

A few words for the clearing of my self, and the Truth I profess in real Love; from him that seeks the good of all Mankind in general, having real Love to all, especially the Household of Faith, who are redeemed to God, out of the Unclean-ness of the World, who are in Scorn called Quakers.

UPon the 16th day of the 6th Moneth, (called *August*) 1680. I being at *Backwell* about my trading (it being a Fair) was by two or three Bailiffs arrested, by virtue of a Writ of *Excommunicato Capiendo*, for not coming to the Parish Church (so called) and not appearing at the Spiritual Court, though I had appeared several times, and had offered to the Parish Priest, that if he could make it appear, that I was in an Error, by clear Scripture, I would take him for my Friend; And further, That if he could make it appear from clear Scripture, that it was my duty in the sight of God, to come to the Parish Church and conform to them, that I would do it; but did not find it his business to seek to inform me at that time, or any other; being not so charitable as to bid me come another time and he would discourse with me: But being after this never cited to the Court again, was upon the day aforesaid taken and sent to *Darby Goal* (a very strange way to convince me of any Error, if I be in any) where I remain a Prisoner.

After I was sent to Prison, many false charges were flung after me, to render me and Truth odious to the Country-People, who were ready to wonder why they should send such a peaceable man to Prison; and I was by my Persecutors so highly accused to be *An Heretick, A Factious Fellow, The Ringleader of a Factious People, yea, a Blasphemer, an Enemy to Caesar, and a dangerous Fellow, and a Spreader of dangerous Principles*, and what not? and all to make the People think hardly of me, and believe, if they could, against their Belief, that I was some dangerous man, insomuch, that they said, *I was not fit to live, especially not fit to be loose in a Country; for by keeping me in Prison, they had hopes to scatter the rest*: At the hearing of these strange and malicious false Calumnies, I was not a little grieved, not for my self, but others, who I heard, were ready to think hardly of me, because such Reports had gained some Credit with some, that were thought both wise and sober; they believed them, because others believed them; those others believed them, because my Persecutors (who are looked upon by most to be spiritual men) reported them amongst these black-Mouth'd uncharitable men. I could not have one to come at me to shew me my reported sad Condition, but in Prison I must lie, come what will come of Wife and Children; so that then my Wife went, with two Friends more, to the *Arch-Deacon*, (so called) and shewed him the unreasonableness of my suffering, and the need of my liberty; but his words were great Charges, as aforesaid, though he never discoursed me about Religion in his life; its true, he also said, *That he would come to me, and discourse me, and if I was in the right, and he in the wrong, I should come out of Prison, and he would go in for*

for me; but he yet fails to make his words good; And I declare to all that may see these Lines, that if I cannot make it appear, that he is wrong and I right, I then will be content to stay where I am; only I would be judged by unprejudiced men to the Truth, and such as are not partial, nor make no outward Gain of the Scriptures: Many others have desired my Enlargement, some by Letters, and some have gone in Person, but all fails, except I will conform, and pay the Charges they have been at in laying me in Prison; which thing I cannot, or dare not do; For, *First*, I believe I ought not to conform to the Worship that now by the Priests of this Nation is maintained by their preaching and practice; I do not mean by their Purfes; for both they and it cost the People dear. *2dly*, I believe, that though it be after the way which they call Heresie, yet that the Worship I now own, is the true Worship of God, and do find by good and great experience, that the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, who is a Spirit doth approve and own it so to be; for the Worship I own and believe is the true Worship of God, is that spoken of in *John 4. 23, 24. They that Worship God aright, worship and serve him in Spirit and in Truth;* and saith our Saviour, *The Father seeketh such to worship him.* *3dly*, Seeing our Lord Christ Jesus, did set up, appoint and command this Worship, therefore I believe I ought not to leave it, and run to another Worship, that is no where commanded, either by Christ, or any of his Apostles, thinking thereby to save my Estate, and to live at liberty in the World, and enjoy those natural Rights and Priviledges I am free-born Heir to, which I see the *Drunkard, Swearer, Curser and Proud Wicked Person* is not deprived of, though he be so Wicked. *Lastly*, Seeing I
do

do those things I believe I ought to do, and have not given any just occasion of Offence, or done wrong to any man, therefore can I not own my self in a fault, and give Moneys for a Pardon to them, that while they are pardoning others, are therein committing the highest Sins they can approach unto ; for if I have sinned it is against God, and to him I look for Mercy ; but in this I am not by him accused or judged as a sinner, but owned and justified by him, and can say, *Its God that justifies me, who shall condemn me ?* Now should I come to my Persecutors, and own my self an Offendor, and buy their Absolution, and conform to their invented Ceremonies, then should I by so doing give God's Spirit and my own Heart and Conscience the Lye ; from which I hope without offence I may take liberty to say, *Good Lord preserve me.*

But seeing I must have no better treatment from my Persecutors than a Prison, which indeed hath alwayes been the way of argument that the false Prophets in all Ages have taken, with things of the like Nature, as *Fines, Whips, Lyons Dens, Firey Furnaces, Faggots,* and such like. I desire they will be pleased to suffer me to treat them a little with a few *Arguments*, which are in my mind, and when I have done, I shall leave them to do, as it shall please God to suffer them, as to me, and desire they may consider and consult their own profit Eternally, and not forget, that e'er long both them and I must appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, to give an Account of the *deeds* done in the Body, whether they be good or evil.

And first, I enquire of you, that persecute me and others, whether, if it was so, as you say falsely it is, *That I was a Heretick, a factious Fellow, &c.* what command, precept or example you have from Christ or his Apostles, to lay me in Prison, seeing I am a peaceable man, and
just

just in my dealing, & pays to *Cesar* his Due, as many that know me will witness? But instead of a command for Persecution, doth not our Lord Christ prohibit it several times? It may be you will say, *Its no Persecution that's done in this kind to an erroneous Person, &c.* Though may be, for all that he is so called by you, who call Light Darknes, and Darknes Light, is a *true Christian*, and Servant of Jesus Christ, but by his Persecutors adjudged to be otherwise, and said, and thought to be that he is not, which indeed is my case at present; Yet I say again, doth not Christ prohibit all manner of Violence, Cruelty, Imposition, and the like, when he bids his Followers, to *love their Enemies*, not Persecute their Friends; and *whatsoever they would that men should do unto them, to do so unto men*, saying, *This is the Law and the Prophets*; and said, *With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again*? Is this obeying Christ's command, in laying men in Prison? For you would not be so done unto for your faithless Faith, and worthless Worship; and though you profess to love God, yet while you in Works deny him, I shall not much heed your Profession; for he is a true lover of him that keeps his Commandments, it will be so found one day, when those that pretended to Preach & Prophecie in his Name, and in his Name cast out Devils, shall be bidden, *depart from him, workers of Iniquity*: And if those that preach in his Name, and prophecie in his Name, and in his Name cast out Devils, be sent away from him, because they, for all that, were workers of Iniquity, what do you think will be the Portion of those that come in the Name of Man, and Preach and Prophecie in Man's Name, and by Man's Authority only are held up; and instead of casting Devils out, tell People, *They must live in Sin all*
the

the dayes of their Lives, & make People content to let the Devil keep the House, hurry them on into Iniquity, Transgression and Sin all the dayes of their Lives; and for all this, tell those very People, that they are *Christians*, and though they do those things they ought not, and leave undone those things they ought, and are miserable Offenders, in whom there is no Health; yet while they put into the Priest's Mouth, are owned as a *dear Brother and Sister*, and so called when they are buried by him, though may be they have killed themselves by a drunken-bout: Oh! how dreadful will the end of these things be! Its a grief to my Spirit to think of it.

But farther, did not Christ command that both *Tares* and *Wheat* should grow together? And doth not these two Words, *Wheat* and *Tares* comprehend all mankind? What can you make for your Practices here? If I be a Tare, you should let me alone till the day of the Harvest; *For what hast thou to do*, saith the Apostle, *with another man's Servant, to his own Master he stands or falls*. And Christ Jesus shewed a Reason also, why he would have men to let them alone, and both grow together; *For*, saith he, *lest while you pluck up the Tares, ye root out the Wheat also*: Which clearly shews that men may be mistaken, especially those that have not an infallible Spirit; for its the Spirit of God that's infallible, which searcheth and makes all things manifest, even the deep things of God. And we have had sufficient experience, that under pretence of plucking up the Tares, which is contrary to Christ's command, the Devil hath laboured with all his Might, to root the Wheat out of the World; and though Christ saith, *He came not to destroy mens Lives, but to save them*, yet the Devil came to kill & destroy mens Lives, not to save them: But we find Christ rebuked his Disciples,

Disciples, when they would have had Fire from Heaven, and told them, *They knew not what Spirit they were of; My Kingdom is not of this World*: He did not come to be Lord & King in an outward manner, and make men yield to him by outward force, for if so, then would his Servants fight; but he came to set up his Kingdom within in the Hearts of men; so that it was promised by the Lord, that he would give him for a Covenant to the People, and would create new Hearts in them, and write his Law in them, and put his fear in their inward parts, and be their God. So when Christ came, he said to them, *The Kingdom of Heaven is within you*; and said the Prophet, *He shall sit as a refiners Fire, and fullers Sope, to purifie the Heart, that it may offer an Offering in Righteousness*. Its true, the Apostles in their weakness, forbade those that they found casting out Devils in his Name, because they did not follow him; but did Christ approve of it? nay, he rebuked them, saying, *He that gathers with me, scatters not: He that is not against me, is for me*. Methinks this might be taken notice of by you Priests, that persecute me and others; you have seen some of your drunken Hearers become very sober men, after they have come to hear the *Quakers* (as you call us) preach; some of your Swearers, Cursing, Proud, Prophane Hearers become very Careful Livers, both in Words and Deeds; And what! doth this grieve you? Methinks you should think such men as these, that prevail so upon Peoples Hearts to be good men, men of your side, if you be for God, and should, like Christ, who you call your Lord and Master, rather rebuke such as forbid us, than forbid us your selves; and when like *Peter and John*, we dare not but speak the things we hear and see, and are commanded, not then to take us and put us in Prison;

and so stop up the Mouthes of them God hath opened, and be angry with them, though they do what they do freely, and look for no part of your great Revenues neither: Remember, you do not desire to be so done by; and also its worth your notice taking, that those our Saviour Christ whipt out of the Temple, were Buyers and Sellers: What would you think, if such must be *whipt* out of your Steeple-houses now, and such only be admitted to Preach as would do it freely in them? But though he did whip such out, as aforesaid, yet we never read that he whipt any in; or that if any would not come to that place, that then he imprisoned them, or fined them, or the like; no, he was a Shepherd, tender and loving unto them; if one went astray, his way to fetch them in hath been; and is ever by his gentle calls unto them, and reproving, rebuking and checking of them in their Hearts by his Spirit, and following of them with his righteous Judgments in their inward man: So that for want of true peace with God, many have returned again to him, who shews them wherein they offend, and when they return, there is more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repents, than ninety nine Just Persons that need no Repentance. *Just Persons*, [mark that] these are none of your Church of *miserable Offenders*: But let me ask you, Is not Faith the gift of God? And that which is not of Faith is Sin, is it not? If so, then I ask, what you had gained if you could make a man chuse rather to conform to your Worship, (yours I call it) contrary to his Faith and Conscience, than lose his enjoyments of Wife, Children, Liberty and Estate, any more than a Hypocrite, one that seemed to be that he is not? nay, may I not say any better than a plain Heretick; for I take him to be a Heretick that is condemned of himself,

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that allows himself to do that he condemns himself for. And truly, this way of persecuting men for their Faith and Conscience, is the only way to bring them to become Hypocrites and Hereticks, and is the way such men have gone in, to hold up their Idolatry and Superstition in all Ages, witness *Baals* Prophets; and the old Serpent knows it well enough; therefore it was said in the *Revelations*, That the Devil should cast some of you into Prison: Some of whom? some of the Servants and faithful Witnesses of Jesus, who would not, could not worship the Beast. But further, suppose I wanted Faith and a right understanding of the things that belong to my everlasting Peace, do you think that a Prison will be a means to bring me into the true Faith? Can the Prison Walls rectifie my understanding, or give me Faith and Wisdom? Did ever Christ command the use of a Prison or Fine, or any thing of that nature, to men that would not hear him, nor believe him? What ground have you for this? shew us your Foundation for these Actions, and bring Command, Precept or Example for them from Christ or his Servants, and then I shall think better of you; but if not, let me tell you, one Day you may find your portion to be what the Prophet said, *Wo to him that spoils, and is not spoiled.* Therefore I could gladly desire, even in pity to your own Souls, that you would consider your doings; not that I am so much grieved for my own suffering for Truth's sake, no, though my poor Wife and Children are near and dear to me, yet blessed be the Lord, I have Faith in God concerning them, and believe he will take care for them and me too, and can trust the Lord upon all accounts, blessed be his Name forever; though it is hard, and will be so found one Day to you, that part me from them, to be stript from them for my

obedience to God, and laid in Prison, and by you reported to be one of the worst of men: Oh! this hath been the old way and manner of Old the Serpent and his Instruments have taken with the Servants of Jesus Christ, witness *Paul's* Accusers and Persecutors; *We*, said they, *have found this Man a pestilent Fellow, a mover of Sedition, a Ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazareans, &c.* And the great Rabbies of those dayes, the Scribes, *Phrisees, High Priests and Rulers*, that persecuted our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, accused him to be *an Enemy to Cæsar, a Blasphemer, and a Deceiver, &c.*

And you that are my Persecutors, are you not much like these men aforesaid, who persecuted Christ and his Apostles, and cryed to the Rulers for help, in your proceedings against me? And though some of you never saw me as I know of, and none of you ever came to discourse me, or see wherein I was mistaken, as to my Faith and Principles; yet you can fling it out, *That I am a dangerous Person, and a Deceiver, and runs up and down the Country to delude People*: Oh! these your Lyes and False Charges will one day be remembred, except you Repent, which I desire you may. And as I said before, consider your doings, and see who you run parallel with; you are but Men, you may be mistaken, seeing you are not led by an infallible Spirit, and therefore cannot be sure your selves are in the right; but you go by conjectures, and rest upon the Judgment of ancient Fathers, reverend Divines, *Hearben* Authors, or your own Conceivings, or the like, and are uncertain, and leave the People unsatisfied, and so manifest your selves to be such as are not sent with the Lord's Message, received from God himself, as by all your uncertain beating the Air is manifest to every one whose Eyes the Lord hath opened:

ed : So that here is great danger, if I should leave Christ the true Light and teacher of men, who now appears by his pure Spirit in my Heart, and shews me the things that do belong to my Peace, and follow you, that I should then be led to act both in Principle and Practice, and *do those things I ought not, and leave undone those things I ought to do*; and then I could not escape being *a miserable Sinner and Offender, in whom there is no health*. Now suppose I should, contrary to my Faith and Knowledge, come to you, and live and dye in Error, for fear of being here kept in Prison, and brought to Poverty in the World, which, blessed be the Lord, I value not in comparison of my Peace with him, the God of Peace, and think to plead with God, and say, *I did what I did in submission to man's Will, who said, they were the Ministers of Christ, and was forced to it by the chief Priests of our Country, and must either submit to their Wills, or lie in Prison, my Goods spoiled, my Wife and Children impoverished; so that I did what I did only to save my Estate, and have my Liberty, &c. or else I would not have done it, for it was against my Faith and Conscience, and because of the fear of Man*: Will this excuse me? If not, then I ask you, Can you excuse me to God, and assure me of it, that if I will conform to your Worship, and give you Monies for a Pardon of my true obedience to God in disobedience to you? For so indeed the case lieth; if not, that you cannot excuse me, if you should or could force me to sin against God, then why should not I, who am a peaceable man, and wrongs no man, but loves all men, have my liberty to live, as I dare dye? Seeing I must answer for my self, and stand or fall to my own Master, what have you to do to judge me, who am the Lord's Servant? And if not, must stand or fall to him I serve: Or how dare you smite your

your fellow Servants, and bring them in Prison that have done you no wrong, nor owe you nothing but love, when he that put in his fellow Servant in Prison, that owed him a hundred Pence, was so severely judged of his Lord, who had forgiven him a greater Debt? And has taught to use those words in Prayer, *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us*: And would you not have God answer your own desires? Consider these things, and learn to do as you would be done unto; for with the same measure you mete, it shall be measured unto you again: And remember what our Saviour layeth down as great offences at the last day to those on the left Hand, *Go you Cursed into everlasting Torment with the Devil and his Angels*; Or, *Depart from me, ye workers of Iniquity, I know you not*; for *I was an hungry, and you gave me no Meat; thirsty, and you gave me no Drink; Naked, and you clothed me not; Sick, and in Prison, and you visited me not*. And when they answered, *When saw we thee an hungry, thirsty, naked, &c. and did not minister unto thee?* He told them, *Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these that believe in me, you did it not to me*. By which its clear, he takes that which is done to his Followers as done to himself; for indeed it is for his sake, who teaches us to live Righteously, Soberly and Godlily in this present evil world; and because we obey him, and keep his Commands, therefore are we hated of all men for his Name's sake; but the Wicked are not thus treated by you, the Swearer, Lyar, Drunkard, Proud Person, &c. are set at Liberty, and in these dayes the men in Fashion: But if it be so great an offence not to visit the Servants of Christ, when in distress; what will it be to those that layeth them in Prison, and keep them there, which is a means to bring them

them into Nakedness, Hunger, Thirst and Sickness? Was it not said, That it was better a Mill-stone was hanged about his Nick, and he cast into the Sea, that offended one of those little Ones that believed in Christ, than he should have done so? If so, then what will his portion be that not only offends them, but persecutes them, imprisons them, spoils their Goods, belyes and slanders their Person, and misrepresents them to the World, takes the Righteousness of the Righteous from him, and strips him from dear Wife and Children, and causeth them to suffer also; though its said, *Cursed is he that parts Man and Wife*. Oh! what excuse can you make at the last day for these things! How unlike are you to him, that is good to all men, and laid down his Life a ransom for all, and doth cause his Sun to shine upon all, and his Rain to descend upon all, and his Grace that brings Salvation appears in all, and strives with all. And this also you might consider, that it hath never been the practice of any Prophet or Apostle, or Servant of Jesus Christ, to persecute any man for Conscience sake, or for his Faith; but on the contrary, it hath ever been the practice of the false Prophets, that run on in the way of *Balaam*, for Gifts and Rewards, greedy Dogs that can never have enough, blind Guides, that love Darkness, and hate the Light, Serpents that have perfect Enmity against the Children of God; and so are Enemies to Christ Jesus, *Babylon's* Merchants, who come in the Power of the Beast, these in all Ages persecute the Lambs followers, and hate the appearance of him, where-ever it is; so that the Apostle saith, *He that's Born after the Flesh, persecutes him that's Born after the Spirit*: Even so it is now, and hath been in all Ages ever since *Cain's* time, who slew his Brother *Abel*, because *Abel's* Works were

were righteous, and his own were evil : So *Cain* was the first Persecutor, and the Lord was displeased with, and avenged the Blood of *Abel* upon him in Righteousness.

Now I might mention many after *Cain*, that were Persecutors, as the *Sodomites*, who said concerning *Lot*, *This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a Judge*; because he entertained the Angels of the Lord, they pressed sore upon him; but the Lord delivered him, whose Righteous Soul was grieved with the filthy Conversation of the wicked *Sodomites*, and brought down his Righteous Judgments upon their heads in a dreadful manner : And the *Egyptians*, who refused to let *Israel* have liberty to go and serve the Lord, persecuted them very sore; but the Lord wrought their Deliverance, and rendered unto *Pharaoh* and his People according to their deeds, as you may read at large in *Exodus*. Likewise *Jezabel* that persecuted them that would not worship *Baal*, God Almighty brought down his heavy Judgments upon her, and the false Prophets of *Baal* that fed at her Table. Remember Proud *Haman* that was full of Indignation against *Mordecai*, because he stood not up nor moved for him ; and how hot he was in his mind to have *Mordecai* and all the *Jews* young and old, destroyed and killed in one day, charging them to the King, (to whom they were very good Subjects, as appeared by *Mordecai*, who discovered the Treason of two of the King's Chamberlains, Keepers of the Door, who sought to lay hands on the King) *That there were a certain People scattered and dispersed among the People in all the Provinces of his Kingdom ; and their Laws, saith he, are divers from all People, neither keep they the King's Laws ; therefore it is not, saith he, for the Kings Profit to suffer them ;* though we do not hear, but they were all peaceable, and hurt no man, only in matters of Worship and

and Conscience they differed from the People of the Land, that could bow to proud *Haman*, who digged a Pit for another, and fell into it himself, and was taken in the Net which he spread for others; glory unto God forever, whose Eyes are over the Righteous, and his Ears open to their Prayers.

Remember it was *Pashur*, the son of *Imer* the Priest, that smote *Jeremiah* the Prophet, and put him in the Stocks, *Jer.* 20. 12. For what? for obeying the Lord. Also, in chap. 26. when he spoke the Word of the Lord in the hearing of the *Priests*, and of the *Prophets* and *People*, then the *Priests* and the *Prophets* and all the *People* took him, saying, *Thou shalt surely dye*; and the *Priests* and *Prophets* spoke unto the *Princes*, and to all the *People*, saying, *This man is worthy to dye, for he hath prophesied against this City*: What *Priests* and *Prophets* were these? Such as could flatter, dissemble and lye, and turn to any thing the people fancied to make themselves rich; see chap. 5. 26. &c. *These were they that lay in wait, that set Snares and Traps, and caught men, whose Houses were full of deceit, therefore they are become great and waxen rich; they are waxen fat, they shine, they overpass the deeds of the Wicked, they judge not the Cause of the Fatherless, yet they prosper; and the Right of the Needy do they not judge; but the Prophets prophesie falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their Means, and my People love to have it so; and what will you do in the end? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the Land, &c. the false Prophets, and the great rich fat Priests bear rule, &c. yea, from the least of them, even to the greatest of them, every one is given to Covetousness; and from the Prophet, even to the Priest, every one dealeth falsely: They have healed also the hurt of the Daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace,*

Jer. 13. 14. & 8. 10, 11. And because *Jeremiah* prophesied truly to them what the Lord commanded, he was put in Prison, chap. 32. 2. and 37. 5. and 38. 6. yea, into a Dungeon, where his feet stuck fast in the Mire, but the Lord preserved him, and wrought his deliverance. And shall I forget to mention *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego*, who would not obey the *Kings Law* concerning Worship, whom God preserved in the hot firey Furnace, but those that cast them in were slain with the flame: Likewise *Daniel*, who ceased not to pray, and give thanks before his God three times a day, when the King had given out a Law to the contrary, and the Lord delivered him out of the Lyons Den, and those that accused him and informed against him were cast into the *Lyons Den*, with their Wives and Children, and the Lyons had Mastery over them, and brake all their Bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the Den. So its clear thorow all the old Testament, that the words of the Apostle are true, *He that is born after the flesh always persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*; and so it is still; for *John Baptist* and our Saviour had no better entertainment than the Prophets had had before them; for as Christ tells us by way of Parable in *Matth. 21. When the Lord had sent his Servants to those Husband-men, unto whom he let out his Vineyard, and they beat some, killed some, and stoned some; last of all he sent his Son, and him they took and slew also*; and to this day are the high-Priests and Rulers slaying, crucifying and murdering the holy One and the Just, in his Apostles and Servants, in whom he appears, telling the World, *This Light within, which shines in the Hearts and Consciences of men, is a Deceiver, a Delusion of Satan, a dark Lathorne*, and what not? though it is only this that discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart, and makes all things manifest of what sort it is; so that the Apostle

saith,

saith, *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, but men love Darknes rather than Light, because their deeds are evil ; for every one that doth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd ; but he that doth Truth cometh to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.* This is very clear, *Light* and *Darknes* cannot agree ; so that it hath ever been the works of *Darknes* that the *Light* hath condemned, and judg'd and made manifest to be *Evil* ; and therefore the old Serpent brings his *false Accusations* of the *Light*, & calls it *Deceit*, &c. and is the *Deceiver* himself, and yet will not abide to hear *Truth* spoken of himself ; no more will his Children who are acted by him, & in whose hearts he reigns, and fills them full of *Pride*, *Covetousness*, *Envy*, *Hatred* and *Malice*, *Cruelty* and *Filthiness* ; so out of their Hearts proceed these things ; and they cry to the Rulers for help against those that preach the Gospel boldly and freely ; as they did by *Stephen*, (so they are doing still, or would do, had they power) when they gnashed on him with their Teeth, cast him out of the City, and stoned him, having charged him falsely, *That he spake Blasphemous words, &c.* These have their blind *Saul's* to run them Errands, to whom they give power to take them bound that are walkers in the *Light*, whether they be men or women ; These command the ignorant and unlearned men (as *Peter* and *John* were) that preach boldly in the Name of *Jesus*, *That they preach no more in that Name* : But we must obey God rather than Man, and cannot but speak the things that we have seen & heard. Now when the Apostles could not but preach the things they had heard and seen, and continued in the Power of God, working mightily, to the healing of the sick, and such as were vexed with unclean Spirits, then the high Priest, and those that were with him, were filled with Indignation, and laid their

hands on the Apostles, and put them into the common Prison; but the Lord brought them out, and sent them into the Temple early on the next morning, where they taught as the Lord commanded them; and there went an Informer to the high Priest, the Captain of the Temple, and the chief Priests, and told them, *That the men they had put in Prison, were standing in the Temple, and teaching the People*; then went the Captain with the Officers, and brought Peter and John before the Council, and the high Priest said, *Did not we straitly command you, that you should not teach in this Name, &c?* Then Peter & the other Apostle answered, *We ought to obey God rather than man*, Acts 5. (read it.) How like those Priests and Officers are these in our days? And how plainly walk these in the steps of those, and practise the like things against those that walk in the Spirit and Practice of the Apostles? And how clear is it, that in all Ages it was those that were born after the flesh, that persecuted those that were born after the spirit? to whom its given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake; not to *persecute* any for his sake, no, nor for reflecting him neither; but its evident the Persecutors are such as seek to please men, not God; this is clear from *Herod*, who after he had killed *John the Baptist*, grew more vile, and stretched out his hands to vex certain of the Church, after Christ was mightily manifested in his Apostles; and he killed *James*, the Brother of *John*, with the Sword; and because he saw it pleased the *Jews*, he proceeded further to take *Peter*, and apprehended him, and put him in Prison, but the Lord sent his Angel, and delivered him out of Prison, and from the hands of proud *Herod*, whom the Angel of the Lord smote, and he gave up the ghost, and was eaten of Worms, because he gave not God the glory. This also is clear from *Pilate*, who

knew

knew (its said) *That for Envy they had delivered him*; yet its also said by *Mark*, *That Pilate being willing to consent the People, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, (when he had scourged him) to be Crucified.* Paul also met with the same Spirit, when the *Jews* saw him in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, and cryed out, *This is the man that teacheth all men every where against the People, and the Law, and this place*; and they went about to kill him, but he was delivered out of their hands by *Lysias* the chief Captain, and sent him to *Felix*, where he was accused by *Tertullus*, (the high Priest *Ananias* being present) *To be a pestilent Fellow, and a mover of Sedition amongst all the Jews throughout the World, and a Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazareans, & that he had gone about to prophane the Temple*: Paul makes his defence before *Felix*, and *Felix* perceived the matter, discoursed *Paul* afterwards, and the Power of God reaching him, he trembled, yet was so bent for to get Monyes; for its said, *he hoped that Money would have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him, sent for him the oftner and communed with him*; yet when *Festus* came into *Felix's* Room, *Felix* willing to shew the *Jews* a pleasure, left *Paul* bound: *Festus* being come into the Province, the high Priest & the chief of the *Jews* informed him against *Paul*. After that *Paul* was brought before the Judgment-seat, where the *Jews* laid many and grievous Complaints against *Paul*, which they could not prove, *Paul* answered for himself; but *Festus* willing to do the *Jews* a pleasure, answered, *Paul, wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged?* for that the *Jews* desired, and thought to lay wait in the way to kill him; but *Paul* appealed to *Cesar*, and afterward declared before *Agrippa*, and *Bernice* his Wife, and *Festus*, *How he had been a Persecutor of the Church himself, and went to Damascus with Authority and Commission from the chief Priests,*

Priests ; & how the Lord met with him by the way, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, &c. See here how hot in their spirits these professing Jews were, and in their blind zeal how cruel they were in their hearts, and how the Rulers looked more at their own Interest, to keep in favour with the people, than to do justly to them who were maliciously and falsely accused to them ; and how clear is it that they have always been a Generation of Cain's Children, that quenched the Spirit of God, and set at nought all his counsel, which persecuted them that were born of it, and lived in it, and were never Persecutors of any for Conscience sake ? So that *persecution* is an evident sign of *perdition*, where-ever it appears, and *suffering for Christ* an evident sign of *salvation*, and that of God ; and therefore many have taken joyfully the *spoiling of their goods*, & rejoyced they were thought worthy to suffer for his sake ; and though they have walked about in *Goat-skins* and *Sheep-skins*, and have been *destitute, afflicted* and *tormented*, yet its said, *The World was not worthy of them* ; and they plainly declare, *That they seek a better Country, a City that hath a Foundation, whose Builder and Maker is God* : And though they go through great *Tribulation*, yet they have *their Robes washed, and made white in the Blood of the Lamb*, and follow the Lamb whither soever he goeth, *having an Eye to him that is invisible, and respect to the recompence of Reward* ; for the Lord takes that which is done to them as done to himself, and therefore said he, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?*

Oh ! that you would consider these things, you that can cry to the Rulers for help against those that cannot hurt you, and Persecute them that are your greatest Friends, and all mens : Cease your Cruelties, and yield Obedience to the commands of him, who is Lord of all, and hath bidden you do as you would be done by,
and

and commanded you to love all men, and do good to all men, and to hurt no man, injure no man, defraud nō man, &c. For we read not of any that were Servants of Jesus Christ, that ever persecuted any for Conscience sake ; for Conscience is God's Throne in man, and he only hath power over it, and it is no less than usurpation to offer to impose upon it. You pretend to be *Protestants*, and that that Name first came up by *protesting against Imposition* ; and what, is it now to be practised ? They condemned it, and so doth God and good Men through all Ages. And it is hard that men cannot live under the Government, except they submit their Consciences to every Edict, and ask you what Religion they must be of ; though its well known, we are peaceable men, and also sober, just, neighbourly and friendly as any men in the Nation ; neither do we make spoil of the Creation, either in Meat, Drink or Apparel : And so, why shall not we have liberty to live as we dare dye ? Truly it is very Unchristian dealing, either to compel us to believe against our Belief, or else to Imprison us and spoil our Goods for practising what we believe, when it is not in the least contrary to the moral Law of God : Methinks you might afford us better entertainment ; the Apostle exhorts to *entertain Strangers* ; for so did the good men of Old, and so entertained Angels unawares sometimes. And what, shall I say you do not know us, who you in scorn call *Quakers* ? for if you did, I hope you would not persecute us ; and though you do not know us, yet as Strangers you might afford us better entertainment than you do ; all we desire of you, is but Liberty to serve our God according to his mind, without being Persecuted for it. Remember what *Edom* did of Old, they refused to let *Israel* pass quietly through their Land, on the King's High-way, though they would

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would have eaten their own Bread, and not have been injurious to any man; *Edom* refused to let his Brother *Israel* go. And is not this like our case? We eat no man's Bread for nought; we covet no mans Silver, Gold or Apparel; we injure no man, hurt no man, defraud no man; we love all men, and do good to all men; and all we desire, is to pass quietly through the World unto the Kingdom of Promise: And we heartily desire you did know us, and then you would know your selves better; and however, one day you will know us, and be ashamed that your entertainment of the true Servants of Jesus Christ, hath been Fines, spoiling of Goods, Imprisonments, Beatings, Stonings, false Accusations, Slanders and Lyes, calling us *Cheats*, *Hereticks*, *false Prophets*, and what not? this is, and hath been our entertainment amongst you, and is mine at this day in Prison, because I cannot, dare not play Hypocrite, and go contrary to my Faith: But you will say, may be, *That my Faith is not true Faith, but I believe an Error*. I answer; you cannot prove your Charges against us from clear Scripture, which saith, *That it is not only given unto us to believe, but also to suffer for his sake we believe in*: But it no where saith, its given us also to make others suffer that do not believe. And suppose I did want a right understanding and true Faith, (I say again) do you think that a Prison will help me? Can a Prison give Faith? Can Prison Walls rectifie mens Understandings? Lay aside these Carnal Crutches, and bring Spiritual Weapons; Truth is sufficient to plead its own cause; and Faith is the gift of God: Its only base *Cain's* false Worship that forceth: He that will not worship the Beast, or receive his mark in his Forehead, or in his Hand, must be killed, or no man must Buy or Sell with him at least: So Error and Enmity, Envy and Cruelty
always,

alwayes go together ; but the Truth is received for its
 own worth ; and its the manner and nature of true
 Faith to work by Love ; pure Religion and true, is lo-
 ving God above all, and our Neighbours as our selves ;
 and in this love we should visit the Fatherless and Wid-
 dows, and not make Widdows and Fatherless (in a sence)
 by casting the Father and Husband in Prison ; this is not
 to keep unspotted from the World ; For its said, the
 World should hate us, (who are true followers of Christ)
 and persecute us, and excommunicate us out of their Sy-
 nagogues, and say all manner of Evil falsely against us ;
 yea, our Saviour tells us, *They shall bring us before Kings
 and Rulers for a Testimony against them :* But Christ Jesus
 no where bids his Disciples excommunicate those out of
 their places of Worship that would not believe, nor bring
 them before Kings and Rulers, or cry to Rulers for to
 put them in Prison, Fine them, and spoil their Goods ; Its
 true, he bids them *shake the Dust off their Feet for a testi-
 mony against them that would not receive their Testimonies ;*
 but when they would have had Fire from Heaven to
 have destroyed those that did not receive him, Christ re-
 buked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit
 you are of ; the Son of man is not come to destroy mens Lives,
 but to save them :* Its true, he tells them, *The Rulers of
 the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them, and their great
 Ones exercise authority upon them ;* But, saith Christ, *it shall
 not be so amongst you, &c.* Remember what he compared
 the angry Scribes and Pharisees to, who took offence at
 both John Baptist and himself, and indeed almost all that
 God sent amongst them ; saith he, *They are like unto Chil-
 dren sitting in the Market-place, and calling one to another,
 and saying, We have Piped unto you, and you have not Dan-
 ced ; we have Mourned unto you, and you have not Lament-
 ed, &c.* And is not this like you ? who are still so Child-

ish to be angry with us, because we do not Dance after your Pipe, nor Lament after your Mourning; Why will you not do as you would be done by? You would not take it well to be forc'd to Conform to us, would you? Then I ask you, why will you not be Merciful, (as Christ commands you) *As your Father (saith he) is Merciful, who is kind (saith he) to the Unthankful, and to the Evil?* Let your Fruits declare you to be Branches of the true Vine, and Children of God: Have you forgot what's said of the man that fell among Thieves, as he went from Jerusalem to Jericho? the Thieves stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead; now the Priest passed by, and the Levite looked on him also, passed by and left him; but the good Samaritan took pity on him when he came by, and bound up his Wounds, poured in Oyl and Wine, and set him on his own Beast, and brought him to an Inn, and took care of him; And (saith Christ) *go thou and do likewise.* Alack! how many lie wounded in Sin and Iniquity, and naked of all that's good! And must none take pity of them? What! though it be a man of another City or Society, if he hath Oyl and Wine, and will lend a Hand of Help, and do good to the Wounded, and help the Naked to a Garment, why should you be offended? It was ill in the Priest and Levite, that would not help him themselves, and shewed a churlish, idle, easeful, selfish Spirit in them, that care not what comes of men, so they can eat the Fat, and clothe themselves with the Fleece, and live at ease: But it would have been much worse in them if they would neither a help'd him themselves, nor suffer another to help him; but if he did, take him and cast him in Prison, spoil his Goods, or put him to Death. And Christ saith, *Wo unto you Scribes, Pharisees and Hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in: Wo*

unto you Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye devour Widows Houses, (yes, in our dayes, leaves her not a Cow to give her Milk, nor a Bed to lie on) And for a pretence (saith he) make long Prayers; therefore you shall receive the greater Condemnation: Wo unto you blind Guides, who lay heavy Burdens, and grievous to borne upon men, but will not touch them with one of your Fingers: But (saith Christ) they walk in long Robes, love the uppermost Rooms at Feasts, and the chief places in the Synagogues, and Greetings in the Markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Master; But (saith he to his Disciples) be not ye called Master, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all you are Brethren. But perhaps you may say, We are not your Brethren. Well, suppose we were not, you ought to love us, if we were your Enemies; But if we be not your Brethren, why do you take Tythes from us? For it was never known that the Children of Israel took Tythes of any, but only their Brethren; see Heb. 7. 5. However, you ought to do all things in Charity; for the Wrath of man worketh not the Righteousness of God: Its said, Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment; for he shall have Judgment without Mercy that hath shewed no Mercy; for if ye have bitter Envyings & Strife in your hearts, glory not, you are no better than Unbelievers; therefore Lye not against the Truth: For, saith the Apostle, this Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: For where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil work; but the Wisdom that is from above, is pure, peaceable, gentle and easie to be intreated; full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie; and the Fruits of Righteousness is sown in peace in them that make Peace. But say you, I am a sower or mover of Sedition. So said the Jews by Paul; but they accused him falsely, and so do you me; for I fear God, and love all men, and herein do I exercise my self, to have alwayes a Conscience void of

*offence towards God and Men, and as much as in me lieth, endeavour to live peaceable with all men ; and do know assuredly that I seduce no man, for the Lord hath given me in his endless Mercy an understanding to know him that is true: And the true Light that enlightens every man that comes into the World, doth not lead us to seduce any, but reprove and condemns Seducers and Sedition, and makes all things manifest of what sort it is. But if I did, or any of us did move Sedition, then it would be seen by our Fruits, Lives and Conversations, and we should not have that presence of God with us, which we have ; and besides, you would do well to shew us wherein; (as the Apostle did them of Old) and shew us our Errors, which are not to be found in a Prison, nor indeed in us, who believe and walk in the Light, and are Children of it. But perhaps you may say, We walk disorderly. Suppose we do, what then ? If you will take the Apostles advice, you should withdraw from us ; and if we observed not, or obeyed not the Gospel-order, do as the Apostle bids you ; For (saith he) if any man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed ; Yet count him not as an Enemy, but admonish him as a Brother. [But not one Word of a Prison or Fine.] No, (saith he elsewhere) the Servant of the Lord must be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient ; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will : Oh, that you would take notice of this great piece of Advice ! And further concerning those that have a form of Godliness, but deny the Power thereof, from such turn away, saith he. And so, you would shew your dislike of such, and disown them to be none of you ; but
 alas !*

alas! where is the Power of Godliness to be seen, if not in the sober, honest *Quaker*, as you call us? who dare not speak his own Words, nor do his own Will, but lays down all to follow the Lamb, in true Obedience to what he requires and commands, though for the same they suffer the loss of all outward things: And truly it is seen fulfilled, that he that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution; and he that departs from Iniquity makes himself a Prey. But the end of the Commandment is Charity out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned; And saith he thus, *Warn them that are Unruly, Comfort the Feeble-minded; Support the Weak; be Patient towards all men; see that none render Evil for Evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both amongst your selves, and to all men:* And then what follows? *Rejoyce evermore:* And truly so they might with good cause, if this counsel were observed: *Pray without ceasing,* (saith he that spoke in Charity) *In every thing give Thanks, for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you; quench not the Spirit, despise not Prophecy; prove all things, hold fast that which is good; abstain from all appearance of Evil.* Oh, what tender Counsel this is! And what need have we to take notice of it here in England! Nay, he tells you elsewhere, *Though he speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, and a tinkling Simbal: And though I have the gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor; and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing: Charity suffereth long,*

long, and is kind ; doth not make men suffer long, for that's unkind. And truly the Apostle is so full in this matter, that all Profession or Religion without Charity, is nothing worth ; Charity, saith he, envieth not, beareth all things : Compare but this with Peter's words ; Add (saith he) to your Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, to Knowledge Temperance, to Temperance Patience, to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity ; if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be Barren nor Unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but he that lacketh these things, is Blind, and cannot see afar off.

And now, if you would judge the Tree by its Fruits, what can you find of these things in Persecution ? And if you believe Scripture, methinks you may see the very current of it runs continually against Persecution, Violence, Oppression, Cruelty, Uncharitableness, and the like.

Perhaps you may say, *Its not worthy to be called Persecution that's done to a Heretick.*

Let me Answer you once more ; Suppose you, that the Scripture is to be taken notice of, and the Precepts therein to be minded ? then see what it saith ; *A man that is a Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, reject, knowing that him that is such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* So here he must be admonished to obey what he knows ; for if he did not sin knowingly, he would not condemn himself : But if he persist and reject Counsel, then reject him, disown him, and have no Society with him, &c. [But not one word of putting him in Prison, Fine him, or spoil his Goods.]

But

But though I thus speak, be it known to you, I am no Heretick, (as you have been pleased to call me) for I am not in the least condemned of my self for what I do, in things relating to Faith and Worship; no, God is my witness, I do what I do in Obedience to him, and do know him to justify me, and comfort me in my Bonds for the same; and it is a light matter to be judged at mans day; yet I for Truths sake, was free to clear my self of your false Charges.

But perhaps you may still say, *If I be no Heretick, I am one that causes Divisions and Offences contrary to your Doctrine.*

Well, suppose I be; nay, suppose I was one that caused Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine of the Apostles, yet see what must be done to such; *Why, saith the Apostle, I beseech you Brethren, mark them that cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to our Doctrine, which ye have learned, and avoid them.* Avoid them, what is that? All flee their Company: But let me tell you, we are none of this sort, for we cause no Divisions from the Truth; it is our travail and labour in the Lord, that men may be truly joyned unto the Truth, and live in it; and its those that serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellys, who by good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple; but these goods Words and fair Speeches the People must pay them well for too, else they must not have them: But for good Works and fair Conversations, those are not to be found amongst the **BELLY-SERVERS.**

But may I not here venture to say by the People called *Quakers*, as *Paul* did by the *Romans*, Your obedience is come abroad unto all Men; yea, and I believe God will bruise *Satan* under our Feet shortly, though he be suffered to cast some of us into Prison now, for the tryal of our Faith, and accuse us falsely of many things, as he did *Job*, and makes Lyes his Refuge, yet his time is short; and God, even our God, will over all Exalt his own Name and Truth, to the Joy of all the Upright-hearted.

Written in Derby Goal in the Year 1682. where I yet remain a Prisoner.

JOHN GRATTON.

Matth. 10. 7. Go Preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

Luke 10. 10, 11. But into whatsoever City ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways into the Streets of the same, and say, Even the Dust of your City which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you; notwithstanding, be ye assured of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

T H E E N D.

